

Focus on Reform: Economic Development and Workforce Training Matching Program

The Economic Development and Workforce Training Matching Program is guided by the Workforce Alliance, a collaborative committee representing the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Department for Adult Education and Literacy, the Cabinet for Workforce Development, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, and the Cabinet for Economic Development. To date, the adult education initiative funds for workplace education programs have leveraged funds with the Bluegrass State Skills Corporation (BSSC) and the Kentucky Workforce Investment Network System (KY WINS). The Office of Training and Reemployment and the Office for Regional Development are active participants as well and may provide matching funds for future projects.

The Alliance accomplishes two objectives:

1. To provide a coordinated system of workforce education; and
2. To leverage new and existing resources to maximize the number of adults and employers enrolled.

The objectives are met in two ways. First, adult education and KCTCS staff, as well as economic development community liaisons, are cross-trained to represent funding resources available through the Alliance. Second, participating agencies promote learning through workplace distance learning, targeted instruction to meet workplace skill needs, ACT WorkKeys assessments, the Kentucky Employability Certificate, and the Kentucky Manufacturing Skill Assessment and Certificate.

Since 2001, the Alliance has produced significant results. Workplace education enrollment increased from 11,000 in 2001 to 22,000 individuals in 2002, with more than 600 Kentucky participating employers. Four projects, the Russell County Prehire, American Woodmark, Owensboro Mercy Health Systems, and the Nelson County Training Consortium, are presented on page 15 to illustrate Alliance activities and outcomes.

Instruction is conducted at the work site at little cost to the employer. For added convenience, two GO HIGHER SkillMobiles are available to set up at work sites, offering employers the latest in technology and training resources.

Cheryl King (council associate vice president for adult education and commissioner of the Department for Adult Education and Literacy), Keith Bird (KCTCS chancellor), and J. R. Wilhite (commissioner of the Department of Community Development) will lead a discussion on this successful initiative at the March 24 council meeting.